



Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet

Christa Smith Creates Wooden 'Bridal Boxes' at Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

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BEREA, Ky. – On Saturday, May 31, Christa Smith, of Elizabethtown, will bring in the bridal season by demonstrating traditional Bavarian painted wooden bridal boxes from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

Born in Germany, Smith moved to America and became fascinated with the cultural contributions German immigrants had made. She began creating traditional crafted items that she had known in Germany, such as chalk ware Santas, beeswax ornaments and painted wooden boxes in the Bavarian folk art tradition or style.

The Bavarian folk art of “Bauernmalerei” dates back to the early 16th century. The correct translation is peasant or farmers’ painting and at that time, cabinetmakers or traveling painters went from town to town offering their painting skills to “touch up” furniture pieces.

From the very beginning, there were as many different styles of “Bauernmalerei” as there were painters of other art forms. Many styles of painting simply included lovely flowers like tulips, roses and small blossoms and bright colors such as blue, red, white and yellow were commonly used. After 1850, painted furniture began to lose its appeal, and many traditional painted pieces were relegated to attics and cellars or even destroyed.

Smith is one artist who is working to make painted wooden box “Bauernmalerei” treasured and collectible again. She creates round and oval painted wooden boxes and trays and beautifully decorates them with colorful images in brilliant rich colors.

Painted wooden bridal boxes, which Smith will be creating May 31, were popular in Germany and America from 1750 to 1850. They were made of wood and often oval in shape. These boxes were given as a wedding gift to the bride from the groom, often with an image of the bride and groom painted on the top. Small items in the bride’s trousseau, such as linens, lace and ribbons, or bridal accessories such as the bridal headpiece, handkerchief or bouquet, can be stored inside.

Painted boxes by Smith are regularly available at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea, located at 200 Artisan Way, just off Interstate 75 at Berea Exit 77. The center’s exhibits, shopping and travel information areas are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the cafe is open from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free.

The center currently features works by more than 700 artisans from more than 100 counties across the Commonwealth. A gallery exhibit, “Repurposed & Recycled: Works by Kentucky Artisans,” is on display through Sept. 6; and in the lobby, “Kentucky Bourbon: Distillation and Inspiration,” is on display through July 6. For information about the center’s events call 859-985-5448, visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentucky.artisan.center, or go to the center’s website at www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov.

Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea is an agency in the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



Painted wooden bridal boxes demonstrated by Christa Smith at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea